

What is aligned curriculum?

Curricula typically refers to academic subject matter and instructional strategies; however, social interaction, exercise, play, and the arts may all play an important role in helping children learn and should be considered part of the curriculum.

Curricula are aligned in two ways. First they are aligned developmentally to reflect the increasing capabilities of children. As developmental capabilities broaden and deepen, so too should the curricula. Second, curricula are aligned with prior instruction so that content, organization, and sequence build on prior knowledge. Alignment is supported when using curricula that have been evaluated for effectiveness in real classrooms (evidence-based curricula).



What does aligned curriculum accomplish?

- Provides consistent and developmentally appropriate instructional practices throughout the early learning years.
- Provides clear understanding to teachers, parents, and others of how to support learning at each stage of development.
- Assesses and monitors children's progress throughout the year.

What is evidenced-based curricula?

It's curricula that have been rigorously assessed in classrooms with regular teachers, children, and material. The studies endorsing these curricula can be found in government websites and in professional journals. Early childhood endorsed curricula include :

Literacy

- High/Scope
- Doors to Discovery
- Success for All
- DLM Early Childhood Express with Open Court Pre-K Reading
- Curiosity Corner
- Early Literacy and Learning Model

Mathematics

- Pre-K Mathematics
- DLM Early Childhood Express Math Software

Social-emotional development

- Positive Action

Aligned curriculum supports student learning and outcomes¹ and helps students smoothly transition from grade to grade. It encourages collaboration by teachers, enriching their professional skills.

What is the curriculum in CPC P-3?

The Child-Parent Center preschool to 3rd grade program does not have one standardized curriculum, but rather it embraces a philosophy that promotes children acquiring basic skills through varied instruction. Classroom activities are structured to promote language and reading skills as well as social and emotional development.

Children learn through a variety of experiences, including whole group experiences, small group activities, shared reading, and journal writing. Teachers and aides focus on providing children frequent feedback on their performance. Because classes are small (preschool ratio 17 students: 2 teachers, elementary grades 25:2), individualized and interactive learning activities are frequent. Teachers and aides receive regular in-service training and feedback on curriculum strategies in order to ensure classroom practices are true to the model proven effective by years of research.

“We have created a new curriculum that supports center-based active learning and connects the content curriculum to an overarching area of study for students to engage with. Along with seeing higher levels of student engagement, we see more student-initiated work and child-driven conversations, lower suspension and referral rates in kindergarten, and higher numbers of students meeting target in oral language and foundational literacy skills.”

— Jenna Ruble
Former Preschool-3rd Grade Manager

CPC P-3 curriculum requirements

- Aligns to standards (Head Start, Common Core, Early Learning Standards, etc.).
- Addresses language-literacy, math, science, and socio-emotional learning.
- Supported by ongoing assessment of child progress.
- Aligned from preschool to 3rd grade.
- Balances child-initiated and teacher-directed activities.
- CPC P-3 leadership team members regularly participate in grade-level and across-grade meetings throughout the year.
- Liaisons for curriculum alignment and parent involvement share their strategies for promoting continuity in instruction and parent engagement with other schools.

Research on curriculum in CPCs

In a 2004 study,¹ researchers found that children in CPCs with both frequent child-initiated and frequent teacher-directed activities had better outcomes when compared with children who experienced only teacher-directed or only child-initiated activities.

Children who received this type of integrative approach were more likely to be ready for kindergarten, had higher reading achievement scores in grade 3 and grade 8, and were less likely to be held back a grade. A child who participated in a highly child-initiated and low in teacher-directed classroom has the highest rates of high school completion by age 22.

Curriculum Approach	School Readiness Score	3 rd Grade Reading Score	High School Completion Rate
HT + HC	51.4	99.6	66.5%
HT + LC	46.5	96.8	62.2%
LT + HC	49.6	99.7	68.4%
LT + LC	46.7	95.1	57.2%
HT – High in teacher-directed activities LT – Low in teacher-directed activities HC – High in child-initiated activities LC – Low in child-initiated activities			

What curriculum should a school consider?

Schools should consider their individual needs when selecting a curriculum package or materials. With diminished resources, it is important to make sure resources for curricula are being used in the most effective way possible.

Using an evidence-based curriculum, while not a guarantee of better learning, can be an effective use of school resources when implemented with quality and adherence to the researched model. Evidenced-based curricula have been evaluated using high-quality research methodology and found to have a positive influence on one or more aspects of a child’s development.

References

- 1 Graue, E. Clements, M. A. Reynolds, A. J. & Niles, M. D. (2004). More than teacher directed or child initiated: Preschool curriculum type, parent involvement, and children’s outcomes in the Child-Parent Centers. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 12 (72).
- 2 Bowman, B.T., Donovan, M.S., & Burns, M.S. (2001) *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers*. Washington, DC: National Research Council.
- 3 Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Initiative. (2008). *Effects of preschool curriculum programs on school readiness: Report from the Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Initiative*. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncer/pubs/20082009/>.